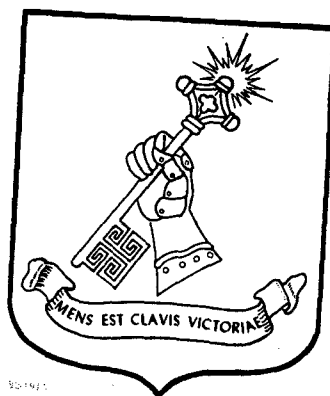


**GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.:
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL BATTLE
COMMAND. WHAT LASTING BATTLE
COMMAND LESSONS CAN WE LEARN
FROM HIM?**

**A MONOGRAPH
BY
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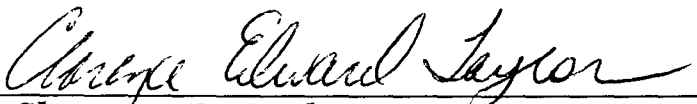
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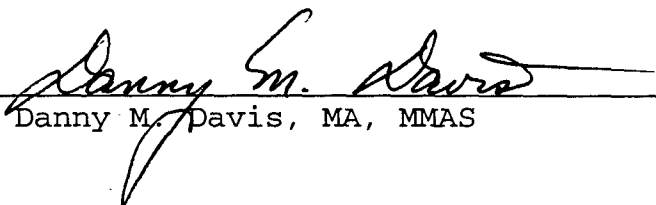
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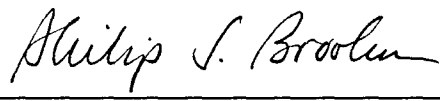
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ABSTRACT

General George S. Patton Jr.: Master of Operational Battle Command. What Lasting Battle Command Lessons Can We Learn From Him? By Jeffrey R. Sanderson, USA, 60 pages.

This monograph discusses General George S. Patton, Jr. and Operational Battle Command. Six primary elements --- Leadership, Decision Making, Information Assimilation, Visualization, Conceptualization, and Communication make up the dynamics of Battle Command. General Patton mastered the application of these dynamics. This monograph defines and provides examples of the dynamics of Battle Command as used by General Patton while he commanded the Third Army.

The monograph first discusses Command and Control of Third Army, as well as General Patton's relationship with his primary staff. The monograph then defines and provides examples of each of the dynamics of Battle Command using General Patton and his staff as the example.

In conclusion the monograph provides three relevant lessons for future operational commanders concerning operational Battle Command based upon a historical study of General Patton. The lessons learned from the study include the training and retention of a competent staff, the commander personally focusing the intelligence effort, and the commander issuing clear intent and guidance especially regarding endstates.

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INTRODUCTION

General George S. Patton Jr. was one of the most successful operational commanders during World War II. As the commander of the Third Army, his units were instrumental in the defeat of German forces and their eventual unconditional surrender. General Patton was not only an operational artist, but also a master of the art of Battle Command. Although the term Battle Command is relatively new in U.S. Army doctrine, being first introduced in the 1993 edition of Field Manual 100-5, it has always been at the forefront of collective army thought. The art of Battle Command, as executed by General Patton and many other commanders throughout history, requires continual study to gain insight into the operational problems faced by these leaders and their eventual solutions. The purpose of this monograph is to show the importance of Battle Command and why it should continue to be studied.¹ Although there are many past commanders who have mastered the art of operational Battle Command, this study focuses solely on General Patton. It will examine General Patton and his actions as the Third Army commander to gain insight for future operational commanders.

Battle Command is a vital component of victory, and although it has been studied in the past, it is imperative as world conditions change, that it continue to be studied in the future. War is arguably the most significant event in a nation's history, and command of military forces in war is a critical event for both the commander and the nation. The commander is concerned with accomplishing his mission with a minimal loss of life. While the nation shares the goal of low casualties, it is also concerned with the use of military force in its attainment of national strategic goals. Victory for the nation means

attainment of national political goals. Defeat means the loss of a nation's youth and resources, and possibly the loss of a culture and a way of life. Therefore, the relevance of this topic increases as U.S. military involvement throughout the world increases.

Operational Battle Command is the means through which the commander exercises his will over both friendly and enemy forces. Operational Battle Command can be defined as the ability to envision activities over time and space to visualize an endstate. It also comprises the ability to communicate visions and concepts to subordinates in order to achieve success on the battlefield at the decisive time and place. It is an iterative process which includes the six interrelated dynamics of leadership, decision-making, information assimilation, visualization, conceptualization, and communication.² Although the term is new to doctrine, the study of these interrelated subjects has occurred throughout the history of warfare. In order to discuss Operational Battle Command, it is important to first understand the operational level of war and its relationship to national strategy.

The operational concept of war, and its primary executor called operational art, provide the vital link between the attainment of strategic objectives and the tactical employment of forces. At the operational level, military forces achieve strategic objectives through the design and conduct of campaigns.³ Operational art is the employment of military forces to obtain strategic and/or operational objectives within a theater through the design and conduct of campaigns. Operational art translates theater strategy into operational reality through the use of integrated battles and engagements. Operational art is the commander's framework from which he decides when and where

major battles and engagements will be fought.⁴ General Patton, as commander of the Third Army, was an operational level commander who practiced operational art. The strategy of the allied forces in the European Theater of Operations included advancing on a broad front to defeat and accept the unconditional surrender of German forces. General Patton translated that strategy and its endstate of unconditional surrender into operational reality through the design and subsequent execution of his campaigns.

Prior to examining General Patton in terms of Battle Command, it is important to first understand his background and the impact his past assignments and his professional study of war had upon his mastery of Battle Command. General Patton had been a serious student of Battle Command and its six dynamics long before he became the Third Army commander. As a young officer, Patton had served with General Pershing on the punitive expedition in Mexico in 1916. Later, he commanded a tank brigade during World War I. Prior to the U.S. entry in World War II, Patton commanded the 2nd Armored Division, I Armored Corps, and the Desert Training Center at Indio, California. After the U.S. entered the war, Patton was designated one of two U.S. commanders under General Eisenhower in the amphibious invasion of North Africa. Following the invasion, he commanded II (U.S.) Corps during its North Africa campaign. After North Africa, he commanded the U.S. Seventh Army during the Sicily campaign. These assignments helped General Patton to become one of the most experienced combat leaders of large units available to the U.S. prior to the Normandy landings.⁵

General Patton was an avid student of war in general and of Battle Command in particular. He was a prolific reader who underlined and annotated many of the important

passages that he studied. Two examples illustrate the depth of his study. In 1919, while serving as commander of the 304th Tank Brigade at Fort Meade, Maryland, he read Sun Tzu and commented that it would make a very good Field Service Regulation.⁶ Although he had previously read Clausewitz as a junior lieutenant, he read the classic again while stationed in Hawaii in 1936. He underlined significant portions of the book and paid particular attention to Clausewitz's references to genius in war.⁷ Clausewitz's descriptions of courage, resolution, obstinacy, and imagination appealed to Patton as he underscored these words in the text.⁸ General Patton also read numerous biographies and autobiographies constantly attempting to learn from the combat experiences of others. His grasp of Battle Command was rooted in both his professional readings and his personal study of war.⁹

The unit General Patton would command in Europe also had a long and varied history. The Third Army was created after the armistice ending World War I, and served as the headquarters for the U.S. occupation forces in Germany. Returning to the U.S. in 1919 it was deactivated. It was reactivated in 1932 and was designated as the training headquarters for the southeastern portion of the U.S. From 1941 until 1943, it was commanded by Lieutenant General Walter Kreuger and became known as one of the best training armies in the U.S. When Kreuger left to take command of the Sixth Army operating in the Pacific Theater, he was replaced by Lieutenant General Courtney Hodges who commanded the army until its deployment to England in 1944. General Patton assumed command of the Third Army upon its arrival in England.¹⁰

Initially, the primary purpose of the Third Army was to continue training for war on the European continent, but General Patton and several members of his staff were closely tied to the invasion deception plan known as Fortitude. The Germans believed that an Army Group consisting of six divisions would lead the invasion to establish the beachhead. They also believed that Patton would lead this force because he was the Allies best commander. Additionally, the Germans believed that any landings in Normandy would be a diversion while the real landings would occur at Pas de Calais. The Fortitude deception plan was designed to confirm the German suspicion that the invasion's main effort would be an attack from Scotland into Pas de Calais in southern Normandy.¹¹ Patton's taking command of the Third Army was initially kept secret. Publically, he was to command the First Army Group which consisted of the Third Army and the First Canadian Army. General Patton died in 1945, never knowing the importance of his role in the deception operation.¹²

The Third Army became operational on the European continent on 1 August 1944. From that date, units of the Third Army fought continuously for 281 days. The Army crossed 24 major rivers, liberated more than 82,000 square miles, captured more than 956,000 enemy soldiers, and killed more than 500,000 others.¹³ The Third Army was a tough, hardened, effective organization that stands out in the archives of American military history. This organization and its commander should be closely studied by future operational commanders to gain an insight into how they solved complex problems.

This monograph will examine General Patton as the Third Army commander in terms of the six dynamics of Battle Command. It will define each of the six dynamics and then provide historical examples of General Patton's use of each of the dynamics. Upon completion of this task, this paper will identify the enduring lessons of Battle Command that will be useful to future operational commanders.

According to the prominent historian Michael Howard, military history should be studied in breadth, depth, and context.¹⁴ This paper is not simply the wartime history of the Third Army overlaid by the concept of Operational Battle Command. It is instead a historical analysis studied in breadth, depth, and context of a leader and his command with the goal of finding those items of significance which are useful to operational commanders today.

COMMAND AND CONTROL OF THIRD ARMY

Prior to discussing the specifics of General Patton and his mastery of Battle Command it is important to understand the concept of command and control and how the Third Army was able to accomplish many of its wartime feats. This section will discuss command and control within Third Army and General Patton's relationship with his staff. While it is true that Third Army was a successful organization because of General Patton's leadership, it is also true that he had an extremely talented staff.

Command is the authority that a commander lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. It also includes the responsibility for effectively managing available resources. While command consists of legal authority and management skills, it is also much more. It is the art of decision making and of leading and motivating soldiers, assigning dangerous missions, and taking risk. Command in the military is vested in the commander who has the responsibility to accomplish his missions with the least cost to his men.¹⁵

Control is the authority exercised by a commander over subordinate organizations. The commander, with the help of his staff, regulates forces and functions of subordinate and supporting organizations to ensure mission accomplishment.¹⁶ Control consists of the many scientific aspects of war such as time/space relationships and consumption rates. The staff does not make decisions but makes recommendations to the commander based upon the facts available to them. Staffs are necessary because

large unit commanders cannot assimilate the vast amount of information available to them. The staff acts as a filtering mechanism and helps the commander to control the organization by providing him with timely and accurate information. The staff makes predictive judgments about future conditions (based upon historical norms) and recommends actions for the commander to take.

The Third Army staff, which proved to be one of the most efficient in WWII, was assembled in Peover, England on January 27th, 1944.¹⁷ General Patton had already met with General Eisenhower and understood that the Third Army would not lead the invasion, but would follow as the exploitation force once the beachhead was secure.¹⁸ The staff consisted mainly of officers coming from the continental U.S., but it was built around the nucleus of officers who had served on Patton's Seventh Army staff in Sicily.

The Chief of Staff is the primary integrator of both the planning and execution phases of a campaign. He is responsible for synchronizing all staff actions. He is the primary information conduit between the staff and the commander.¹⁹ This position was especially critical in light of the fact that Third Army did not have a deputy commander. The position was filled initially by Brigadier General Horbart R. Gay.²⁰ The Deputy Chief of Staff is the principal assistant to the Chief, with primary responsibility for operations. This position was filled by Colonel Paul D. Harkins.²¹ The G-2 is responsible for all matters concerning military intelligence, counterintelligence, security operations, and military intelligence training.²² This position was filled by Colonel Oscar W. Koch.²³ The G-3 is the primary staff officer for all matters concerning plans, operations and training.²⁴ This position was filled by Brigadier General Halley G.

Maddox.²⁵ The G-4 is the primary staff officer responsible for coordinating and executing the logistical functions of supply, maintenance and transportation.²⁶ This position was filled by Brigadier General Walter G. Muller.²⁷ These officers formed the core of a cohesive, highly integrated staff which attempted to stay one step ahead of an aggressive commander.

Brigadier General Hobart Gay (later Major General) had served previously as Chief of Staff for Patton during the Seventh Army campaign in Sicily. He began his service with Patton while Patton commanded the 3rd Cavalry at Fort Meyer. He was a member of Patton's I Corps staff, his Desert Training Center staff, and served as Chief of Staff for Patton's Western Task Force operating in North Africa. He was an old cavalry soldier and a trusted friend of both General Patton and his wife, Beatrice. He was often criticized for his lack of intellectual capability, and because he shared Patton's prejudices and politics. He was disliked by higher staffs for his protection of and blind faith to Patton.²⁸ Gay was severely disliked by both General Eisenhower and his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith. They thought that he did not have the intellectual capacity to handle the job and they urged Patton to replace him. Under protest, he did replace Gay with Major General Hugh J. Gaffey, relegating Gay to the position of Deputy Chief of Staff. This lasted from 1 April 1944 until Gaffey became the commander of the 4th Armored Division on 10 October 1944. When Gaffey left, Gay resumed his duties as Patton's Chief of Staff.²⁹

The Deputy Chief of Staff was Colonel Paul D. Harkins. He was responsible for assisting General Gay with the day to day management of the staff. Although Brigadier

General Halley G. Maddox was the Third Army G-3, with primary responsibility for operations, it appears that Harkins was responsible for integrating the other staff elements into the G-3's plan. Both were trusted by General Patton and were extremely loyal to their boss. General Patton believed that, as the commander, he was personally responsible for providing detailed guidance to his planners. On numerous occasions, General Patton would personally conduct the G-3 portion of operational briefings. Although many commanders were content to let their G-3 develop courses of action, General Patton did not operate in this mode. He gave detailed guidance to his operational planners prior to the start of the planning process and then stayed involved in the process until its completion. General Patton thought that many of his peers, particularly General William Hood Simpson (Ninth Army Commander), relied too heavily upon their staffs for planning and as a result wasted valuable planning time.³⁰ Both Maddox and Harkins were extremely talented tacticians, who after some trial and error, came to appreciate what the commander wanted and did their utmost to give it to him.

The Third Army G-2 was Colonel Oscar W. Koch. Koch had served previously with General Patton in 1938 while he was the Regimental Executive Officer of the 9th Cavalry at Fort Riley, Kansas.³¹ Koch was a career Cavalry officer who had served as an enlisted volunteer during the Mexican expedition, served with distinction in World War I, and organized the first federally recognized National Guard unit in Wisconsin. He had served as the Chief of Staff of Task Force Blackstone during the invasion of French Morocco. He became General Patton's G-2 in Sicily and served in that capacity for the

remainder of the war. He and General Patton had a close professional working relationship based upon mutual trust and respect.³²

The Third Army G-4 was Brigadier General Walter J. Muller. Muller was a career officer who began service with Patton in North Africa. He would later earn fame as the best staff logistician in the European Theater of Operations.³³ General Patton had tremendous confidence in Muller and gave him broad guidance in terms of support priorities. Muller himself was a legendary scavenger, and his subordinates were often referred to as "licensed pirates" by other commands. They were believed to have roamed throughout the rear areas armed with captured German souvenirs trading them for much needed supplies. They were also accused of requisitioning supplies from depots and ports while masquerading as staff officers from other armies. On one occasion, Muller did not report captured fuel and used the fuel to augment Third Army's stocks. General Patton turned a deaf ear to those accusing Muller and his subordinates, and claimed that none of his officers would do anything like that.³⁴ It appeared to others that Third Army blatantly disregarded supply rules and would do whatever it took to obtain the supplies they needed. Muller was given free reign over the acquisition of supplies and was supported in all his endeavors by General Patton.³⁵

This group of men formed the brain trust of the Third Army. They were all trusted by General Patton and each was intensely loyal to him. Although General Patton was a showman in front of the troops, he was extremely pragmatic with his staff. He insisted upon efficiency and expected his staff to help him visualize the future battlefield. The Third Army headquarters was similar to a large business operation with efficiency

being the primary goal. Very few things were done for show in the headquarters and a feeling of purpose permeated the staff.³⁶

This team of officers had over four months operating together as the Third Army staff prior to the Normandy invasion. Many of them had worked for General Patton for over thirteen months prior to forming the Third Army staff. Prior to the Normandy invasion General Patton was briefed twice daily at 0900 and again at 1700. After commencing combat operations in France, the morning briefing was moved to 0700. Prior to the formal morning briefing, Patton would meet with Gay and the primary staff to review the current situation. The briefings consisted of the current situation briefed by Brigadier General Maddox (G-3), followed by the air situation briefed by the air officer, and then Colonel Koch (G-2), would brief the current and predicted future enemy situation as well as a worldwide news update. The briefings rarely lasted more than 20 minutes. A separate tent was available for the numerous liaison officers assigned or attached to the headquarters. Immediately following the formal brief to General Patton, one of the primary staff officers would brief the liaison officers on the current and future (predicted) situation. The liaison officers would then go to their respective headquarters and brief their parent commanders. By noon each day the entire Third Army shared a common picture of the friendly and enemy situation.³⁷

At the formal briefing either Brigadier General Otto P. Weyland, commander of the XIX Tactical Air Force, or his Chief of Staff were present. Weyland was new to the staff, but quickly became an integral part of the planning and execution of Third Army operations on the continent. Weyland was a strong supporter of Patton's warfighting

methods, and became one of Patton's trusted advisors. As the war progressed the staffs also developed close working relationships. Because of these relationships, most of the air missions ordered by the Third Army staff were already under consideration by the XIX Tactical Air Force staff.³⁸

Although the staff played the major role in planning operations, the Corps commanders who were to execute the plan were also involved with plan development. General Patton rarely forced plans upon his subordinate commanders. Once the staff had formulated a plan based upon his guidance, he would bring the Corps commanders to the war room and brief them. He would insist upon frank and open discussion between the Corps commanders and his staff concerning the operation, but once he made his decision, it was final.³⁹ The Corps commanders participation in this process gave them a sense of ownership in the plan. Furthermore, their participation in the process helped synchronize all efforts toward a common purpose.

Once General Patton made his decision, the staff would issue the order to the subordinate commands. The operations order normally never exceeded one page in length and often had a map sketch on the back for clarity.⁴⁰ General Patton would often modify a plan through the use of a letter of instruction. This document was a statement of intent which stated the purpose of the operation, the limitations, constraints, and coordination necessary to execute the operation, and a broadly defined endstate.⁴¹ These documents were of immense value to the subordinate commanders as they provided the essential elements of information needed to conduct the operation.

Additionally, the Third Army staff coordinated its activities with the subordinate corps staffs. Each staff section would hold a conference with all of the subordinate staffs on a regular basis. For example, the G-2 section held a conference every fifth calendar day.⁴² These conferences were followed by a written summation of the conference which were then disseminated throughout the command, allowing for a common picture of the battlefield to evolve.

Three other aspects of command and control in the Third Army distinguished it from other armies in the theater. While the other numbered armies occasionally employed similar techniques they were not as successful, and did not receive prominence in either individual biographies or unit histories.⁴³ The first was the commander and staff's ability to visualize the battlefield. General Patton ordered Colonel Koch to construct a strategic terrain model of the Brittany peninsula to a scale of 1:250,000. This was completed prior to the Normandy invasion and was used for rehearsals and orders briefs to the Corps commanders. The model was later expanded as the Third Army's area of operations increased. This model was situated in the Third Army war room which tracked the current situation reports from front line units and was where the vast majority of operational decisions were made.⁴⁴ Both the war room and the terrain model were moved each time the main command post moved. This system allowed General Patton and his staff as well as subordinate commanders and their staffs to visualize the terrain that they would be fighting on. It also gave them a sense of time distance relationships and the logistical problems that they would encounter.

The second distinctive aspect of the Third Army Command and Control system was the employment of the 6th Mechanized Cavalry Group as the Third Army Information Service during combat operations. This unit was commanded by Colonel Edward M. Fickett and it would monitor radio traffic from reconnaissance units reporting to battalions, regiments, and divisions. It would also establish contact with front-line units in contact and exchange friendly and enemy information with them. It would report directly to Third Army's forward command post bypassing all other echelons of command. Its goal was to provide timely and accurate information to the Third Army, and establish a common situational awareness among all of Third Army's subordinate commands.⁴⁵ It became General Patton's "directed telescope," through which he could visualize the battlefield and maintain a sense of situational awareness.⁴⁶

The final command and control distinction was the Third Army's use of its G-3 Liaison section for the purpose of information gathering and common situational awareness. The Third Army placed great emphasis upon liaison. The G-3 liaison section, not the G-3 Operations section, was responsible for information dissemination. Unlike other units, the Third Army used liaison officers to pass information to their respective commands, and to receive and post updated information from their commands. Each of the Liaison officers were constantly updated on the current Third Army situation, and were required to stay abreast of their parent units status and report that status to the Third Army. This flexible system of communications and information dissemination enabled all of the subordinate commands to stay abreast of the current situation and to report updates to the Army headquarters. It also functioned not only as an operations and

intelligence conduit, but also as a means of collecting the logistical status of subordinate commands.⁴⁷ The G-3 Liaison section was responsible for obtaining the pertinent data from the other staff sections for subordinate liaison officers, and for providing updated information from the liaison officers to the other staff sections. An additional benefit of this system was that the G-3 Operations section could focus entirely on the current situation, and was in a position to answer questions from the commander in a timely manner. While all of the numbered armies were authorized a G-3 Liaison Section in its Table of Organization and Equipment, it appears that only the Third Army used it to its maximum benefit.

Approximately 325,000 troops were assigned to the Third Army when it became operational on the European continent on 1 August 1944. General Patton exercised command and control over four corps, three mechanized cavalry groups, the XIX Tactical Air Force, and numerous supporting units.⁴⁸ Although the number of Corps and Divisions assigned to the Third Army varied throughout the war, Appendix 1 depicts the organization as it began operations in Europe.

All of the units assigned to the Third Army operated with a single, unifying focus—the destruction of the German Army. General Patton exercised his unique command and control system to accomplish his mission and became famous in the process. Having gained an appreciation of how command and control was conducted by General Patton and his Third Army, it is now time to examine General Patton and his mastery of the art of Battle Command.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Leadership

Leadership is the most essential dynamic of Battle Command. It is the leader's task to provide purpose, direction and motivation to his subordinates. It involves taking responsibility for decisions; being loyal to subordinates; inspiring and directing combat power toward a purposeful end; establishing a team oriented command climate; demonstrating moral and physical courage under fire; and providing the unifying vision for the entire command.⁴⁹

The commander's responsibilities do not begin when he is in combat, but begin when he assumes command of the unit. His will must permeate the unit as he provides the common vision which focuses the entire unit. During combat operations, the commander is personally responsible for formulating the single unifying concept for a mission. He must possess the will to direct and motivate the forces he intends to send into combat. The commander is responsible for assembling the personnel, equipment, and information necessary to accomplish the mission.⁵⁰ He is responsible for all that his unit accomplishes or fails to accomplish on the battlefield.

The commander's personality, his professional competence, and his will represent a significant part of any unit's combat power.⁵¹ General George S. Patton, Jr. was a dynamic leader who personified the image of the great combat leader. He was known to his soldiers at a time when General Bradley was largely unknown, and when many of the soldiers in the First Army could not identify their commander, Lieutenant General

Courtney Hodges.⁵² General Patton liked to be seen by his soldiers and traveled in an open jeep which was equipped with three large stars affixed to the front and rear.⁵³ His style of leadership was direct, yet contrary to popular opinion, he was an extremely sincere leader who truly cared for his soldiers. All leaders face adversity and General Patton's leadership was tested during the Lorraine Campaign. Short on fuel, faced with an aggressive and determined enemy, and constrained by higher headquarters, General Patton rose to the challenge and defined the Battle Command dynamic of leadership.

From August until early November 1944, the Third Army had advanced from the coast to the Moselle River and had assumed a defensive posture in order to allow supplies (primarily fuel) to be built up within the Theater.⁵⁴ General Bradley had ordered the Third Army to consolidate its defense and to enlarge the bridgehead over the Moselle. Patton, as usual, called in his three corps commanders (Eddy, Haislip, and Walker) to discuss the conduct of the defense with his staff.⁵⁵

The Germans were also planning and had quickly redeployed two panzer grenadier divisions from Italy in an effort to stop Third Army's expected offensive. The German commander, Field Marshall von Rundstedt, believed that although the British had superior infantry, the Americans, who were daring and imaginative with their armor, were the primary threat. He considered General Patton a far more dangerous adversary than Montgomery.⁵⁶ The Fifth Panzer Army, commanded by General Hasso von Manteuffel, was Rundstedt's principal force tasked to stop the Third Army. The Fifth Panzer was ordered to counterattack the Third Army's vulnerable right flank. Although the Third Army was in dire need of fuel, it had managed to consolidated its defenses

along the Moselle and was able to stop the counterattack. This led to a stalemate along the front with the Third Army defending poor terrain in miserable weather.⁵⁷

General Patton was not content to sit idle during this critical time, and ordered aggressive patrolling throughout the area of operations. His version of how to conduct the defense consisted of continuous small scale attacks and repositioning of forces for future offensive operations. Because these actions were unauthorized, they were undertaken by small units in order to prevent interference from higher headquarters. Patton felt that it was essential that his troops retain their offensive spirit during these logistically constrained times.⁵⁸ He also insisted that his troops be made as comfortable as possible, and issued an order that each soldier receive one pair of dry socks per day. It was also during this time that the Third Army had as many non battle casualties due to the early winter weather and the rain, as it did battle casualties. During this period Patton began to increase his visits to the front and reinforced his standing order that one member from each staff section visit the front each day.⁵⁹

General Patton's presence at the front boosted morale and when time and conditions permitted, he gave speeches to front line units. He stressed the same three themes to each unit he visited. First, the Third Army will soon resume the offensive into the heart of Germany. Second, he would praise the unit for its previous successes and proclaim his faith in them for all they had accomplished and for all they would accomplish in the future. Finally, he would encourage them to be aggressive in all of their combat actions claiming that this spirit combined with their leadership would lead them to victory.⁶⁰

During a time in which he was constrained by logistics and harassed by the weather, he continued to provide purpose, direction and motivation to his soldiers. He provided purpose by constantly stressing the offensive and reminding soldiers of the ultimate goal of defeating the German Army. He provided direction by ordering his staff to continue planning offensive operations so that his units would be prepared when the attack order was issued. He provided motivation by his constant travels to the front and by talking to soldiers and leaders. He cared for his soldiers morale and welfare and insisted that his soldiers basic needs be addressed even though they were in a resource constrained environment.

General Patton provides numerous examples of leadership during his command of Third Army. But it is important to note that he was at his best not during a time of constant victories and relentless pursuit of the enemy, but during a time of defense, a time of a prolonged operational pause. General Patton believed that had he been given the resources, he could have defeated the German army and won the war by late 1944. He protested when he saw the opportunity for an early victory evaporate due to the logistical constraints placed upon the Third Army. When his protest fell upon deaf ears, he did what all great commanders do in situations such as these. He planned for future campaigns while continuing to motivate and care for his soldiers. He continued to provide the leadership for which he would become famous. General Patton was a student of history and a student of great commanders. He knew that at this critical juncture, sound leadership would make the difference between a demoralized, downtrodden force or a spirited, rested force prepared to resume offensive operations. General Patton was a master of the battle command dynamic of leadership.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Decision Making

Decision making is the art of knowing if, when, and what to decide.

Commanders must anticipate the activities that will occur once they make their decision, and must know and understand the consequences of their decisions. Commanders must understand the intent of the commander two levels up. Commanders must also understand the perspective of the subordinate commander two levels down who will ultimately have to execute his decisions.⁶¹

Operational commanders are responsible for allocating the means to accomplish their decisions. They are responsible for setting the conditions for a positive and decisive outcome. Operational commanders must decide on the size and composition of committed and reserve forces, determine when to exploit success or consolidate gains, and how they are going to protect the force. They are not focused on single battles or engagements, but rather look at the campaign in its entirety. Campaigns are a series of related military actions designed to achieve one or more strategic objectives. Operational commanders are focused on setting the conditions for future decisive battles within the structure of the campaign plan. Additionally, operational commanders must decide which decisions they must make themselves, and which decisions are best left to subordinate commanders.⁶²

General Patton was a master of the art of military decision making. He had studied warfare his entire life and was an avid reader of military history and great commanders.⁶³ He knew when decisions needed to be made and what the ramifications

of each of his decisions were. He believed that a commander should be able to show the dispositions of his forces two levels down on his personal map. To show more detail would encourage the higher commander to meddle in his subordinates business.⁶⁴ His personal knowledge of the battlefield would be crucial to his decision making during the critical Ardennes Campaign.

During late December 1944 the Germans launched a counterattack through the Ardennes forest which would alter the course of the war. During the morning briefing on 25 November 1944 Colonel Koch, the Third Army G-2, stated that the Germans were fully capable of mounting an offensive. Koch was concerned about a buildup of German forces on the Third Army's northern flank. The Third Army staff at that time was beginning to plan for a campaign designed to breach the vaunted West Wall in mid-December.⁶⁵ Colonel Koch continued to monitor the buildup and asked for and received a special meeting of the commander and staff on 9 December 1944. During the meeting Koch and his G-2 section briefed the command on the buildup of German forces on the Third Army's northern flank. General Patton then ordered the staff to begin outlining a plan to meet the threat to the north while continuing to plan the campaign to breach the West Wall defensive line to the east. He believed that the Third Army should "be in a position to meet whatever happens."⁶⁶

During the morning briefing on 16 December, Colonel Koch briefed that the German forces to the north were in radio listening silence and that he believed an attack of significant strength was imminent and that it would be aimed at Luxembourg to the north. Earlier that same morning, two German panzer armies attacked into the First

Army's sector. Their objective was the port of Antwerp with the purpose of splitting the allied forces. It was Hitler's last gamble for victory.⁶⁷

General Bradley, the 12th Army Group commander, was conferring with General Eisenhower when he was informed of the attack. His initial reaction was that it was a spoiling attack designed to disrupt Third Army's upcoming offensive. As more reports began to come in, General Eisenhower decided that it was not a spoiling attack but a major offensive which must be dealt with quickly.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, General Patton had first called a meeting of his primary staff which was then followed by a meeting of the full staff to discuss plans to help First Army.⁶⁹

General Eisenhower met with his subordinate commanders on the 19th of December to discuss the rapidly deteriorating situation. Present at the meeting were: Lieutenant General Walter B. Smith (Eisenhower's Chief of Staff), General Bradley, Lieutenant General Devers (6th Army Group commander), Lieutenant General Patton, Lieutenant General de Guingand (General Montgomery's Chief of Staff), and several primary staff officers from the various commands. The commanders all agreed that all allied offensives were to halt and that the containment of the penetration was their top priority. Once the German penetration had been stopped the allies would then counterattack.⁷⁰ Near panic existed throughout the allied forces as evidenced by the fact that Lieutenant General Hodges, the First Army commander whose forces were in the middle of the German penetration zone, was not in attendance at this meeting. That General Eisenhower had committed his strategic reserves (the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions) to the battle was further testimony to the gravity of the situation.⁷¹

General Eisenhower asked General Patton how soon he would be able to attack and with what amount of force. General Patton replied that he could attack in two days with three divisions. General Eisenhower thought that Patton was being boastful and was not amused by the boast. He was concerned Patton would attack piecemeal and would not have the mass required for a decisive victory. General Patton and his staff had assembled three plans, any of which could be quickly executed based upon the results of this meeting. The Third Army Commander did not look at the situation from a panicked point of view, but viewed it as an opportunity to deal a decisive blow to the enemy. Although all present at the meeting were accustomed to rapid maneuver warfare, the thought of pulling three divisions out of battle and having them reorient north and move over one hundred miles over icy roads to blunt the German offensive astonished them.⁷²

General Patton approached the map and began outlining his plan for the operation. While the other participants at the meeting came with only unspecified thoughts about the operation, General Patton had arrived with not one, but three plans, each having its own code word for implementation. Patton would have preferred that the Germans be allowed to advance even further and then counterattack to destroy the entire German army operating in the bulge, but this was not considered nor briefed during the meeting. Within one hour, the details of the counterattack were discussed and decided upon. Two of the three corps assigned to Third Army would be committed to the effort. New army boundaries and objectives were designated. General Devers Sixth Army Group front was expanded to include that portion previously covered by Patton's Third Army. At the conclusion of the meeting Patton telephoned General Gay with the code

word which had been assigned to that specific course of action and the plan was implemented.⁷³ Appendix 2 depicts the situation from 16-25 December 1944.⁷⁴

The speed with which General Patton moved his III and XII Corps into the battle is a tribute to not only his leadership during this tense period, but also to his ability to make operational decisions. Patton trusted Colonel Koch, his G-2, believing his analysis in November was correct when many others believed the Germans were defeated. By the 9th of December he realized the potential for a major battle on his northern flank and ordered his staff to begin constructing contingency plans. By the 16th of December he and his staff had developed three separate plans from which they could reinforce the First Army. He understood that the possibility existed for the counterattack to occur through the Ardennes and he decided to plan for the contingency. He understood the ramifications that the implementation of these plans would have not only on his subordinates, but also on the major units on his left and right flanks.

General Patton's ability to read the battlefield, plan the movement, and command and control two corps during this time serve as an excellent example of the battle command dynamic of decision making. The Battle of the Bulge was his finest hour in uniform. He was at his absolute best from the time he received the initial briefing on the enemy's situation in late November until the relief of Bastogne by Third Army units on December 26th, 1944. He did not guess his way through the situation, but relied upon seasoned staff officers and commanders to make tough, competent decisions during moments of crisis. He had prepared his entire career for this campaign through his study of history and of great commanders. His intense study of history and his astute use of the talent around him enabled him to become a master operational decision maker.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Information Assimilation

In war the magnitude of information about the friendly and enemy situation challenges leaders at all levels. Operational commanders must absorb thousands of bits of information to understand the battlefield, assess current and future situations, and plan and direct the decisive action required for mission accomplishment. Acting on the current situation while thinking and planning for the next situation are simultaneous actions for operational commanders.⁷⁵

Assimilation is the ability of a commander to process available information and retain that information which is important. Assimilation is the first step in information analysis and allows the commander to form a mental picture of the battlefield. The operational commander must focus his staff on what items of information he needs in order to make timely and accurate decisions. He must have the ability to quickly comprehend and assess the current situation while remaining focused on the future situation.⁷⁶

General Patton understood the dynamic of information assimilation and used several techniques to ensure that he got only the information that he needed to make his decisions. The Third Army primary staff, with the exception of Brigadier General Maddox the G-3, had been together since the campaigns of North Africa.⁷⁷ They understood their boss and knew what information he needed to make decisions. The staff's informed input, the use of the 6th Mechanized Cavalry Group (as the Third Army

Information Service) and the efficient use of the G-3 Liaison section allowed Patton to make sound decisions based upon the most current and relevant data.

An excellent example of how General Patton assimilated information and used it to his advantage occurred prior to the Normandy invasion. General Patton read all six volumes of the *Norman Conquest*, which was the history of William the Conqueror and his battles on the Brittany and Normandy Peninsulas. He believed that the most intense study of the art of war was conducted by studying the road networks. From this book he closely studied William's advances, and drew the conclusion that the roads in William's time had to be sighted on passable terrain. He knew that modern roads were also sighted on passable terrain. When the Germans demolished the road network, he followed the same roads used by William the Conqueror.⁷⁸

After completing his study of William the Conqueror, General Patton called Colonel Koch into his office and told him that the focal point of all intelligence planning was to be on Metz, France. From his personal study, General Patton realized that Metz was a major transportation hub which must eventually be secured. His ability to conduct a thorough terrain analysis using William the Conqueror's campaign as a model attest to his information assimilation abilities. In the broadest terms, Patton had identified for his G-2, the Essential Elements of Information he needed concerning the enemy. From this guidance Colonel Koch was able to focus his intelligence effort. Koch realized that he would be required to provide all relevant information on the enemy and terrain initially around the coast, and then deep into the heart of France.⁷⁹ The G-2 could focus his

intelligence activities because General Patton had done a thorough study of the area and had identified the information he needed to accomplish his breakout mission.

As previously discussed, the Third Army war room was prominent in understanding how General Patton assimilated information. This unique feature was unlike any of the other briefing rooms used by operational commanders in the European Theater. The main feature was a 1:250,000 map which showed the dispositions of all friendly and enemy forces down to division level. This map was flanked by two other maps. One showed the latest dispositions on the Eastern Front and the other displayed the Third Army's zone of action. The Third Army map (1:100,000) showed the troop dispositions down to Battalion level. Additionally, the G-2 portion of the room had numerous charts and graphs which displayed the enemy order of battle. Also, the G-3 displayed on charts the casualties suffered by Third Army and those of the enemy.⁸⁰ These coupled with the terrain models allowed an instantaneous assimilation of the information needed to make good decisions.

General Patton could quickly assimilate the information he needed to make decisions. His focus was always on the location, disposition and capabilities of the enemy. He constantly emphasized active reconnaissance and reporting of information. He also stressed that information be disseminated to his subordinate commanders for their assimilation. Patton had a theater wide view of the enemy and would not conduct an attack until all enemy divisions that might affect the attack were located.⁸¹ In order for him to conduct the type of campaigns he wanted, he had to know the enemy's

intentions. This mental process assisted him in his risk assessment, and enabled him to mass his combat power on the enemy while protecting his forces.

General Patton's preferred method for defeating the enemy consisted of four basic tenets. First, he believed that it was critical to find out what the enemy intends to do and execute the friendly plan before the enemy can execute his plan. Second, attack the enemy quickly with mass and never allow the enemy a chance to reorganize his defence. Third, once the enemy withdraws relentlessly pursue him. Finally, clear the area by mopping up those elements friendly forces bypassed in either the attack or pursuit phases.⁸² He desired a high tempo for all of his operations and needed accurate information on both the friendly and enemy situations in order to maintain the tempo.

His staff, which had operated together for over eighteen months, enabled him to maintain the tempo he desired. His Chief of Staff managed the information flow through the use of standardized daily briefings. This technique allowed the entire staff to understand Patton's decision making cycle and present only the information he needed to make decisions.

General Patton understood the need for information. Throughout his career he led from the front often gaining the information he needed first hand. As the Third Army commander, he had a cohesive staff which understood the critical information he needed and provided him with the information he needed to make decisions. He was also imaginative in his use of maps, terrain models, liaison techniques, and his use of the 6th Mechanized Cavalry Group as the Third Army Information Service. He had studied the problem of military information management via his readings of military history. He understood that he could be overwhelmed with information. But the wise use of his staff

coupled with his innovative techniques in obtaining information allowed him to assimilate only the most critical information he needed to make operational decisions.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Visualization

Visualization is the act of forming a mental picture of the future battle. It is the combination of a clear understanding of the current situation coupled with a vision of what the future state will look like. Visualization combines the unit's purpose with the commander's intent to form a basis for the commander's estimate.⁸³ The operational commander must define the endstate and then visualize how his forces will accomplish that purpose, and how they will be arranged at endstate.

Visualization combines enemy information, friendly information and information about the terrain in terms of time, space and purpose. The interrelationship of these dynamics is an art form. "Seeing the terrain" consists of identifying key and decisive terrain and the effects that terrain will have on friendly and enemy forces. A complete terrain analysis will include the impact that weather and illumination will have upon mission accomplishment. "Seeing the enemy" consists of understanding the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, and capabilities and limitations. This allows friendly commanders to attack and exploit enemy weaknesses while avoiding attacks against enemy strengths. "Seeing yourself" in terms of purpose, time and space consist of knowing the strengths and weaknesses of friendly units and subordinate commanders.⁸⁴ Once the commander has a clear mental picture of the desired endstate he must articulate it to his subordinates two levels down.⁸⁵

General Patton was a master of visualizing the battlefield. He used his war room to graphically display the situation. He constantly studied maps, and read the history to

gain insights into the dilemmas that were present during previous campaigns. These techniques enabled him to continually anticipate both his and the enemy's next move. His ability to anticipate and then visualize the endstate of the Battle of the Bulge saved many allied lives.

On March 7th, 1945 elements of the First Army captured intact the bridge across the Rhine River at Remagen, Germany. The Germans responded to the loss of this key bridge by counterattacking to recapture the bridgehead. This created a number of opportunities for the allies in general and specifically the Third Army. That same day elements of the Third Army reached the Rhine River north of Coblenz. Patton had sent his XX Corps to the north through the Hunsruck mountains and by the 25th of March he had defeated the two German armies defending the Sarr-Palatinate triangle.⁸⁶ The Third Army would be ready to cross once the area west of the Rhine had been cleared.

General Patton had long visualized how he would cross the Rhine and what his subsequent actions upon crossing would entail. He had ordered his engineers forward and had collected large quantities of engineer bridging equipment in anticipation of this event. Elements of the Third Army crossed the Rhine on the night of March 22nd. Units crossed at Nierstein and at Oppenheim. Once across the river, the Third Army (which now consisted of four corps made up of twelve infantry and six armored divisions) began to exploit success. By the 4th of May, the Third Army was ordered to stop twenty miles within the Czechoslovakian border near the town of Pilsen. He clearly understood his purpose and this, combined with his ability to visualize the battlefield made him a master of the battle command dynamic of visualization.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Conceptualization

Conceptualization is the commander's concept of operation for the entire organization. The commander must establish and maintain connectivity between the current situation and future situations. Conceptualization is the commander's intent combined with his concept of the operation operating together to accomplish the mission. The commander's concept includes his visualization of the scheme of maneuver, the coordination and interfaces required for execution, and the risk he is willing to accept. His concept must allow subordinate commanders to act within the overall purpose in the absence of orders.⁸⁷

General Patton understood the need for conceptualizing and articulating plans so that his subordinate commanders could operate within his intent in the absence of orders. Through the use of his efficient staff, he was able to issue concise yet clear orders to his subordinate commanders. Prior to starting a major offensive he would assemble his subordinate commanders and plan using their input. These actions enabled the Third Army to operate as a collective body and to continue operations in the absence of detailed orders.

On the 1st of August 1944 the Third Army became operational on the European continent and immediately faced a major problem. The primary mission of the Third Army was to secure a bridgehead across the Selune river between the towns of Avranches and St. Hilaire-de-Harcouet. General Patton's concept of the operation called for the capture of the French towns of Brest and Lorient.⁸⁸ The problem facing the Third Army

was not so much the enemy, (although resistance from both the air and ground was stiff) but the terrain along the axis of advance. The Avranches gap was a significant piece of key terrain through which VIII and the XV Corps had to pass in order to obtain their objectives. It was extremely restrictive terrain, and given the continual harassment from the air and the fact that many of the units passing through the gap would be truck mounted infantry, the risk level was extremely high. If a traffic jam occurred, the resultant losses to enemy action would be high.⁸⁹

General Patton had developed the concept of the operation and now he and his staff had to determine how they were going to pass two corps through this difficult defile. The German main air effort was directed against these coastal bottlenecks where all of the supplies for the Brittany advance had to flow from the Normandy coast. The Avranches gap was one of their primary targets. Patton directed two armored divisions to pass through the gap.

The 6th Armored was to clear the gap and turn north toward Saint Malo with the subsequent objective of Brest. The 4th Armored Division was to clear the gap and assault the enemy garrisoned in the town of Rennes.⁹⁰ Both divisions successfully executed the concept allowing follow on corps troops to pass through the gap unimpeded by ground maneuver forces. Appendix 3 depicts the breakout operations conducted from 1 through 13 August 1944.⁹¹

The routes eventually became congested and General Patton found himself as a traffic cop. When a traffic jam occurred near the center of Avranches, Patton leaped onto a police box and began directing traffic. He continued to direct traffic for over an hour--

to the amazement of his soldiers. Soon the bottleneck was reduced and vehicles began to move quickly through the town. The concept had worked, and the two divisions continued to attack drawing enemy ground forces toward them and away from the axis of advance. Patton believed that his forces had to quickly clear this defile and conquer Brittany. Only when the coast of Brittany was secure could his forces turn east and become a decisive force.⁹²

The Third Army continued its rapid advance through Brittany and then turned east. Patton's concept was to rapidly overwhelm the German defenders forcing them to deal with a series of dilemmas occurring nearly simultaneously from different points on the map. This concept worried many of his subordinate commanders who were constantly concerned about their flanks. The concept of massed, independent attacks to capture key terrain while exposing their flanks in the process was counter to what they had been taught in army schools. They did not accept the notion that speed was their best security. Patton did not flagrantly disregard his subordinate commanders worries, but had attempted to mitigate the risk by never making a major move without first consulting Colonel Koch, his G-2. This coupled with his access to intelligence gained from ULTRA intercepts and information from French resistance fighters allowed him to reduce the risk and execute his concept.⁹³

General Patton was successful at both developing and communicating his concepts to his subordinate commanders because he had a veteran staff who understood his guidance and intent. He was tactically competent and took pride in his ability to act as his own G-3.⁹⁴ He believed in orders which contained a clear task and purpose. As previously mentioned, his orders were rarely over one page in length and were

accompanied by a sketch map which allowed subordinate commanders to visualize the concept of the operation. Once the order was issued, he would personally supervise its execution by visiting his subordinate headquarters. General Patton was a master at developing and executing concepts.

General Patton and Battle Command Dynamics: Communication

The ability of a commander to communicate his decisions is an absolutely critical task. Communication is the bridge which links decisions to actions. The commander must be able to receive information from various sources, quickly visualize the battlefield, develop a concept of operations, and then communicate his concept and intent to his subordinate commanders. His instructions and directions must be crystal clear and he must insure understanding from his subordinate commanders.

General Patton was a master communicator. The speeches he made while serving as the Third Army commander attest to his oratorical skills. Written instructions also convey intent. A detailed analysis of one of his Letters of Instruction to the Third Army would provide testimony to his writing skills as well. These letters carry specific operational messages which allow the reader to clearly understand what a truly great communicator General Patton was.

On August 7th, 1944 the Germans launched a counterattack against the previously mentioned Avranches gap. The purpose of the counterattack was to isolate the Third Army from the other elements of the newly formed 12th Army Group. Patton initially thought that the counterattack was a bluff, but later sensed its purpose. He committed three divisions to a counterattack. While he was repulsing the counterattack he ordered his XV Corps to execute one of Patton's favorite maneuvers, the end run or wide envelopment, and attack the exposed southern flank of the German 7th Army. The attack

was a major success and ended with the destruction or capture of half of the German 7th Army.⁹⁵

General Patton personally wrote the written Letter of Instruction sent to Major General W.H. Haislip, who commanded XV Corps. The initial paragraph of the letter clearly states the purpose of the operation which was to drive the Germans against the Seine river between Paris and Rouen. The second paragraph clearly explains the XV Corps role in the operation. Haislip was told to advance along an axis from LeMans to Alencon to Sees with the purpose of securing the area from Sees to Carrouges. He was to be prepared to continue the attack after gaining his initial objectives. The letter further explains his Task Organization which included the 5th Armored, 79th and 90th Infantry Divisions, and included the newly attached 2nd French Armored Division. In subsequent paragraphs Haislip is told to utilize all available transportation including tanks to transport infantry and was told to maintain one infantry combat team in the immediate rear of each of his advancing divisions.⁹⁶

The letter also was specific in its coordinating instructions. It stated that the 80th Division of the XX Corps would relieve him of responsibility for his present bridgehead and that the 35th Division (of the XX Corps) would also be operating in the area. Patton also explained his subsequent vision and concept by stating that he eventually wanted two corps abreast, but would wait on subsequent circumstances before deciding which of the two corps would move in order to get into this position. Patton also explained that the purpose of the letter was to give Haislip the plan as it was currently envisioned and that his mission was to destroy Germans. He finished the letter by telling Haislip that

nothing prohibited him from using all roads within the Third Army's zone. He closed the letter by describing the current boundary between the First and Third Army.⁹⁷

General Patton followed up the letter with a visit to the XV Corps headquarters and a personal discussion with Haislip.⁹⁸ This command technique allowed Patton to communicate his concept, intent, and vision to his subordinate commanders. During all of his wartime communication Patton continually stressed the purpose of each operation. He apparently believed that if the subordinate clearly understood the purpose of the operation then the subordinate could continue to operate in the absence of orders. This technique also facilitated operations when unexpected opportunities arose. The subordinate commander, who understood the purpose of the operation, could exploit the opportunity and remain well within the parameters set by General Patton's intent.

General Patton was a master communicator. He understood that he could develop the greatest of war plans, but if he could not articulate them to his subordinates then he would fail. He also realized the important linkage between visualizing the battlefield, developing a concept, and communicating that concept to his subordinate commanders. General Patton was a master communicator who understood the battle command dynamic of communication.

CONCLUSIONS

Three Great Lessons for Future Operational Commanders

Future operational commanders can derive three great lessons from this historical study of General Patton and the Battle Dynamics of the Third Army. The first lesson is to train and retain a veteran staff. The second lesson is to personally focus the intelligence effort. Finally, the third lesson is that a commander must leave no doubt as to what is to be accomplished during each operation.

The first lesson derived from this case study is that the veteran staff of the Third Army knew what their boss wanted and gave it to him. As simple as this sounds it is not the norm. An operational level staff has tremendous responsibilities and a staff that is not cohesive and that does not follow a standardized procedure will fail. The majority of the Third Army staff had served with General Patton since the beginning of the war. They came together during the invasion of North Africa, followed Patton initially to the Seventh Army, and later to the Third Army. They had worked closely together for over eighteen months of intense combat prior to joining the Third Army staff. They trusted each other and were trusted by Patton. They followed a standardized information processing procedure and always produced integrated staff products. They understood Patton's warfighting methods and knew the standards that were required of them. They were cohesive and no evidence exists of any fighting or petty jealousies taking place between any of the members of the staff. They expected direct guidance from their boss

and then produced high quality products based upon that guidance. They were integral to the success of the Third Army.

General Patton was able to exercise operational Battle Command because of his great staff. They were the enabling force that allowed him to exercise all of the dynamics of Battle Command. They assisted him in his information assimilation and decision making by providing him with the most current friendly and enemy situation, and by filtering the information so that he was not overloaded. They assisted him in his visualization and conceptualization by building and maintaining a complex war room which enabled him to quickly think through complicated problems.

The lesson for future operational commanders is that a competent staff must consistently train on the critical combat related functions that it will execute in war. Once it is trained the staff must stay together. A staff can develop the cohesion and effectiveness required only after working and training together for a long period of time as evidenced by the Third Army staff.

The long term implications for the U.S. military is that it is necessary to develop and retain a staff over a long period of time in order to increase its combat effectiveness. Currently, United States Atlantic Command is responsible for training Joint Task Force staffs. Although these staffs receive extensive training under a well formulated structure, they do not normally remain together as a permanent wartime staff.⁹⁹ Joint Commanders today must have a trained group of individuals who understand their contribution to the total effort. It is imperative that individual staff officers be trained in the essence of warfighting. As this historical example has shown, the Third Army staff was a collection

of proficient individuals who had worked together for over eighteen months prior to combat. Coherent staff work is an integrated effort and requires collective training over time in order to maintain proficiency. The U.S. military would be well served by investing in the time and expense of establishing a permanent joint staff which could deploy once the Joint Task Force was activated. Upon arrival in the theater this staff, which had trained together, would constitute the JTF Commander's staff.

Command and control are linked together to provide decisive action. General Patton commanded the Third Army, but the staff controlled it. Without such a proficient staff the Third Army would not have enjoyed the successes that it did. The staff, because of its long relationship with its commander, was able to control the Third Army on limited yet efficient guidance. The Third Army staff enabled its commander to visualize the campaign by providing him with tremendous visual aids. From that he was able to develop and communicate his concepts to his subordinate leaders. Once the campaign began, the staff carefully managed the information flow allowing the commander to concentrate on only those items that were significant to decision making and mission accomplishment.

Modern Joint Task Force staffs can also enable their commander to fully exercise Battle Command. They can accomplish this by providing the aids to visualize the campaign. Current and future technologies allow commanders to see the terrain, the enemy and themselves in far greater detail than ever imagined by the WWII Third Army staff. Modern staffs can assist the commander by fully exploiting this technology, helping the commander to develop and communicate his concepts to his subordinate

leaders. Modern staffs can also enable the commander to exercise Battle Command by focusing on only those items of information that are crucial to victory, and freeing the commander to exercise direct leadership over his subordinate commanders.

The second major lesson for future operational commanders is that the commander needs to personally focus the intelligence effort. General Patton was an information maniac, but his focus both prior to, and during combat operations was always on the enemy. As this study has shown, he personally directed his intelligence effort by telling Colonel Koch (G-2) to focus on Metz, France, and rarely made a move without first consulting with Koch. He was always forward being his own sensor for activities at the front. His aggressive leadership style coupled with a complete intelligence picture allowed him to visualize both the current and future states of the campaign, and it enabled him to execute bold concepts against an unsuspecting enemy.

General Patton personally focused the intelligence effort, but he did so in a systematic and thorough manner. The daily briefing schedule allowed information about enemy dispositions to be disseminated throughout the Third Army by noon each day and assisted in maintaining a common situational awareness. He was also willing to dedicate resources to fulfill his intelligence collection requirements. His imaginative use of the 6th Mechanized Cavalry Group as the Third Army Information Service, enabled him to quickly have the information he needed to make critical decisions.

General Patton was the forefather of the Commanders Critical Information Requirements (CCIR). He personally stated his Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR) for each operation. He focused on friendly forces by determining what he needed to

know about his organization, or the Friendly Forces Information Requirements (FFIR) which in his case would often be oriented on his current fuel situation. He focused on what he did not want the enemy to know about his organization by publishing what has become the Essential Elements of Friendly Information (EEFI). He did this primarily by masking his intentions and being aggressive even when he was on the defensive. He had a tremendous ability to assimilate information, but he still centered his attention on the information he needed to make decisions. CCIR was a critical component of General Patton's command style, allowing him to assimilate only the information he needed to make operational decisions.

Modern Joint Task Force commanders cannot lead from the front and personally direct traffic as General Patton once did, but they can personalize their operations through various means. The emergence of satellite communications enables JTF commanders and their staffs to not only communicate globally, but to do so via video teleconferencing. This allows the commander to communicate his vision and concept to subordinate commanders in a manner conducive to feedback. This technology allows staffs to disseminate specific information and intelligence to subordinate staffs. This technology also allows the modern operational commander to communicate the planning and results of his intelligence efforts to his subordinate commanders.

Current JTF commanders must also understand the importance of personalizing their CCIR in order to obtain only that information they need to make decisions. This allows the commander to consider what information he needs in order to make operational decisions. It also requires him to assemble a trained, cohesive staff that

knows its commander and can give him what he needs. Modern JTF commanders need to train themselves on the amount of information that they can assimilate, and practice personalizing their CCIR. Although General Patton had a tremendous ego, he knew that he could not assimilate the vast amounts of information flowing into his headquarters. He knew what his personal information assimilation capabilities were, and tailored his information requirements (CCIR) to match his personal strengths and weaknesses.

There are two key points that future operational commanders can draw from General Patton's intelligence processing methods. First, personally focus the intelligence effort. Know where your opponent is and what his capabilities and intentions are. Second, determine what information you need about the enemy on a recurring basis and standardize the collection and presentation of that information. By focusing the intelligence effort and tailoring the information flow, the commander can focus his energy upon gaining and maintaining the initiative.

The final lesson for future operational commanders is to be directive in nature. General Patton was not noted for wasting time. He understood the importance of communicating guidance and intent not only with his subordinate commanders, but to his staff as well. He was proud of the fact that almost all of the concepts of operation executed by the Third Army were initially developed by him and not by his staff. He believed that a commander had to be his own G-3 in order to be successful. Many commanders give their staff vague guidance and then tell them to plan. They operate off of the principal that they will know what they want when they see it. General Patton

certainly did not do this. He believed that the commander was responsible for visualizing and conceptualizing the campaign and he trained his staff to assist him in that endeavor.

In addition to his directiveness he was also constantly forward seeing the situation for himself. Often commanders become prisoners in their own headquarters. This has two immediate negative impacts. First, a commander who stays at his headquarters is prone to meddle in his staff's business and as a result will stop commanding and start over controlling his staff. Second, the commander will not have the same perspective on his units in combat if he does not see them. General Patton was notorious for slipping into subordinate headquarters and simply looking around. Years of experience allowed him to feel the climate in a headquarters. This technique not only gave him a sense of how a unit was doing, but also gave the soldiers in a unit a sense of General Patton.

There are two points for future operational commanders in this lesson. The first is to be directive in dealing with the staff, and the second is to get out of the headquarters and assess the current situation yourself. Being directive in nature and issuing detailed planning guidance increases a staff's efficiency because it focuses their efforts and helps them manage time. The staff which does not receive directive guidance will spend inordinate amounts of time attempting to execute the traditional decision making process. This normally requires the staff to develop several courses of action and analyze them against what the enemy has the capability to do.¹⁰⁰ While there is tremendous merit to this systematic approach to campaign planning, it is also a time consuming process. Commanders who are directive and issue detailed guidance should get what they asked for in the final product. This method efficiently manages both the commander's and the

staff's time. The commander can then spend time out of his headquarters assessing the friendly situation for himself. The staff can then refine the plan and begin the process of developing critical branches and sequels to the original plan. This was the process that General Patton used with his staff.

As previously stated, modern commanders probably cannot go to the front as General Patton did, but they can get out of their headquarters and see the situation for themselves. A commander who issues direct and detailed guidance to his staff, and tailors his personal information flow through the use of CCIR has the time to exercise personal leadership over his force. JTF Commanders have years of experience and can quickly assess situations in subordinate headquarters. If they have trained their staffs properly they should be able to go to a subordinate headquarters and get a "feel for the situation" as General Patton did.

Battle Command can be learned. Historical examples like General Patton provide models of how it was exercised in the past. These models provide evidence of how important this subject is, and why it should continue to be explored. General Patton exercised Battle Command in a different time and age, with different equipment, against a different enemy. Other great commanders have exercised it to great effect in hundreds of campaigns in a variety of locations and circumstances. The question that arises is how does the U.S. Army teach Battle Command to its future leaders. History provides part of the answer by furnishing relevant examples. Theory provides part of the answer by contributing the dynamics of Battle Command. Finally, doctrine integrates both history and theory, and provides a framework for continual study. The only feasible conclusion

is that Battle Command be retained in doctrine and that this important subject be continually studied by the professionals who are tasked with executing the art of Battle Command.

This historical study of the dynamics of Battle Command using General Patton as the model has revealed two major points. First, that Battle Command dynamics are tangible in the sense that history can provide concrete examples of them in action. The interrelated dynamics of leadership, decision making, information assimilation, visualization, conceptualization, and communication are important points to consider for the future operational commander. Second, it proves the use of history as a teacher. Often history is seen as dated facts which have little relevance. The lessons gained from a historical study of General Patton and the Third Army are important, and should be carefully considered by future operational commanders in their study of Battle Command.

ENDNOTES

¹ On January 7, 1997, AMSP students received a briefing on the new edition of FM 100-5. The term Battle Command was to be replaced with the simpler term Command. This decision has far reaching implications. Command connotes many things to many people while the term Battle Command connotes command in war that is distinctly different from command in peace.

² U.S. Army, Battle Command Battle Laboratory, *Battle Command Techniques and Procedures*. (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Department of the Army, February 1993), 1-1 through 1-4.

³ U.S. Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, June 1993), 1-3.

⁴ Ibid., 6-2.

⁵ Douglas J. Morrison, *Operational Battle Command: Lessons For The Future*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, May 1994), 26.

⁶ Roger H. Nye, *The Patton Mind: The Professional Development of an Extraordinary Leader*, (Garden City Park, NY: Avery, 1993), 50.

⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 101 through 112.

⁸ Nye, 71.

⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰ Charles M. Province, *Pattons Third Army, A Daily Combat Diary*, (New York, NY: Hippocrene Books, 1992), 9-14.

¹¹ H. Essame, *Patton: A Study in Command*, (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 126-127.

¹² Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Books, 1996), 593-594.

¹³ Province, 334.

¹⁴ Gary P. Cox, " Of Aphorisms, Lessons, and Paradigms" in *The Journal of Military History*, Volume 56, no. 3 (1992) : 401.

¹⁵ U.S. Army, Feild Manual 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, Final Draft (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, August 1996), 1-1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1-2 through 1-5.

¹⁷ D'Este, 571-572.

¹⁸ Ibid., 568.

¹⁹ FM 101-5, 2-3 through 2-5.

²⁰ Brenton G. Wallace, *Patton and His Third Army*, (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, 1981), 21. MG Hugh J. Gaffey was the CoS 1 April 1944 until 10 October 1944.

²¹ Ibid., 21.

²² FM 101-5, 4-19.

²³ Wallace, 21.

²⁴ FM 101-5, 4-21.

²⁵ Wallace, 21. Although D'este in his book *Patton: A Genius for War*, states that Maddox was among those who were trusted by Patton and were from his Seventh Army Staff, this does not appear to be the case. A thorough review of the Seventh Army staff shows no record of Maddox as a primary staff officer. It is possible that he was an assistant whom Patton thought enough of to elevate to the position of G-3, and it is virtually assured that Patton knew Maddox prior to his filling the position as Third Army G-3.

²⁶ FM 101-5, 4-25.

²⁷ Wallace, 21.

²⁸ D'Este, 418.

²⁹ Ibid., 570. An example of General Gay's personality and devotion to General Patton occurred while Gay was Chief of Staff of the Seventh Army in the Sicilian campaign. During the Seventh Army's attack to seize Palermo, Sicily; General Alexander, the Theater commander, decided that he had given the Seventh Army too much leeway and cabled them to alter their current objectives. General Gay decided to inform the command (General Patton) of only the first portion of the message, and left out the crucial second part of the message which was the order to stop the attack on Palermo. General Gay also ordered the signal section to report to Alexander's command that the message had been garbled in transmission and requested that the message be sent again. By the time the message traffic was sorted out, Patton and the Seventh Army had already captured Palermo. General Patton's reaction to the incident was never recorded. General Gay viewed warfighting in much the same way as General Patton and was extremely loyal to his boss. General Gay would later command the 1st Cavalry Division in the Korean conflict.

³⁰ Ibid., 596-597.

³¹ Ibid., 365.

³² Oscar W. Koch, *G-2: Intelligence for Patton*, (Philadelphia, PA: Whitmore Publishing, 1971), xi-xiii.

³³ D'Este, 421.

³⁴ Ibid., 651.

³⁵ Ibid., 652-653.

³⁶ Wallace, 17.

³⁷ Wallace, 17-21 and D'este 575-578. Although D'este uses BG Wallace as his primary source he also states several facts without notes. The paragraph reflects a compilation of the two closely related sources.

³⁸ Harry H. Semmes, *Portrait of Patton*, (New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc, 1955), 193.

³⁹ D'Este, 575 and 577.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 577.

⁴¹ Semmes, 196. Numerous examples of the letters of instruction can be found in Third Army After Action Reports and in Pattons own *War as I Knew it*. Semmes list Pattons Letter of Instruction to the XV commander (8 August 1944) as an example of clarity of orders from Patton to subordinate commanders.

⁴² Koch, 57.

⁴³ Neither General Eisenhower in his *Crusade in Europe*, nor General Bradley in his *A Soldiers Story* mention the use of a large terrain model from which they planned. The answer may be that both were at higher levels than Patton and felt they did not need the tool to visualize the terrain. I could find no evidence that General Hodges of First Army nor General Simpson of Ninth Army used this technique. Also, I could find no evidence of either of the other Armies using a Cavalry Group as an information service. Although the G-3 Liaison section was on all Tables of Organization and Equipment for an Army headquarters it appears that only the Third Army made maximum use of this resource.

⁴⁴ Koch, 56-58.

⁴⁵ Dean A. Nowowiejski, *Concepts of Information Warfare in Practice: General George S. Patton and the Third Army Information Service, August-December 1944*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, 1995), 18-23. The author states that the Third Army was authorized a Signals Information and Monitoring unit for the purpose of providing liaison and combat information to the Army commander. He also states that Third Army did not have this unit and General Patton created the Army Information Service using the 6th Mechanized Cavalry Group.

⁴⁶ Gary B. Griffin, *The Directed Telescope: A Traditional Element of Effective Command*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, July 1991), 19-20.

⁴⁷ Wallace, 19.

⁴⁸ Semmes, 192-193.

⁴⁹ U.S. Army, Battle Command Battle Laboratory, *Leadership and Decision Making for War and Operations Other than War*, Draft 2.1, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Department of the Army, April, 1994), 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁵¹ Ibid., 11.

⁵² D'Este, 654.

⁵³ Ibid., 655.

⁵⁴ Nye, 140-141. The limitations on fuel were emplaced by SHAEF, and were for the eventual purpose of making a strike into the heart of Germany by forces in the north centered on General Montgomery's 21st Army Group.

⁵⁵ George S. Patton, Jr., *War As I Knew It*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), 136.

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- ⁵⁶ D'Este, 662.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 663.
- ⁵⁸ Nye, 141-142.
- ⁵⁹ Semmes, 217-219.
- ⁶⁰ Semmes, 217-219 and Patton, 139 through 150. The dairy recordings of General Patton reveal that he was constantly in motion visiting units at the front. Essame also addresses Pattons speeches and his constant movement during this time on pages 201 through 212.
- ⁶¹ BCBL PAM 2.1, 12.
- ⁶² Ibid., 12.
- ⁶³ Nye in his book *The Patton Mind* studies the professional development of General Patton through the books he read. Of note is Mrs. Pattons list of books she considered to be his favorites listed on page 128. The original list was published in an article Mrs. Patton wrote for *Armor* magazine in 1952.
- ⁶⁴ Patton, 147-148.
- ⁶⁵ D'Este, 676.
- ⁶⁶ Koch, 78-87.
- ⁶⁷ D'Este, 675.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 678.
- ⁶⁹ Wallace, 147-151.
- ⁷⁰ D'Este, 679-680.
- ⁷¹ General Paul D. Harkins, *When the Third Cracked Europe*, (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1969), 41-42.
- ⁷² D'Este, 680. Although there are numerous accounts of this famous meeting D'Este's account which uses numerous and diverse sources appears to be the most consistent and thorough.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 680-681.
- ⁷⁴ Thomas E. Griess, Series Editor, West Point Military History Series: *Atlas for the Second World War-Europe and the Mediterranean*. (Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing). Map # 72.
- ⁷⁵ BCBL PAM 2.1, 13.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 13.
- ⁷⁷ D'Este, 572.
- ⁷⁸ Patton, 92 and D'Este, 612.

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- ⁷⁹ Koch, 53-54.
- ⁸⁰ Essame, 124.
- ⁸¹ Nowowiejski, 13-17.
- ⁸² Ibid., 16.
- ⁸³ BCBL PAM 2.1, 13.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 38.
- ⁸⁵ Although the discussion on visualization comes from the BCBL Battle Command Handbook, the original idea of visualizing yourself, the enemy and the terrain comes from Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*.
- ⁸⁶ D'Este, 709-711.
- ⁸⁷ BCBL PAM 2.1, 14.
- ⁸⁸ Patton, 98.
- ⁸⁹ D'Este, 627-629 and Essame, 149-150.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 628.
- ⁹¹ Griess, map # 64.
- ⁹² D'Este, 628-630.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 637.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 596-597.
- ⁹⁵ Semmes, 196. The remainder of the German 7th Army escaped in the controversy over the Falaiase Gap. Although numerous accounts of the Falaiase incident are available D'Este provides the clearest and most concise in his book on pages' 639-645.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 197.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 197.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 197.
- ⁹⁹ United States Atlantic Command, *Joint Task Force Headquarters Mission Training Plan*, First Draft (Fort Monroe, Virginia: Department of Defense, October 1994), I. The introduction describes the level of training.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 5-IV-14 through 18.

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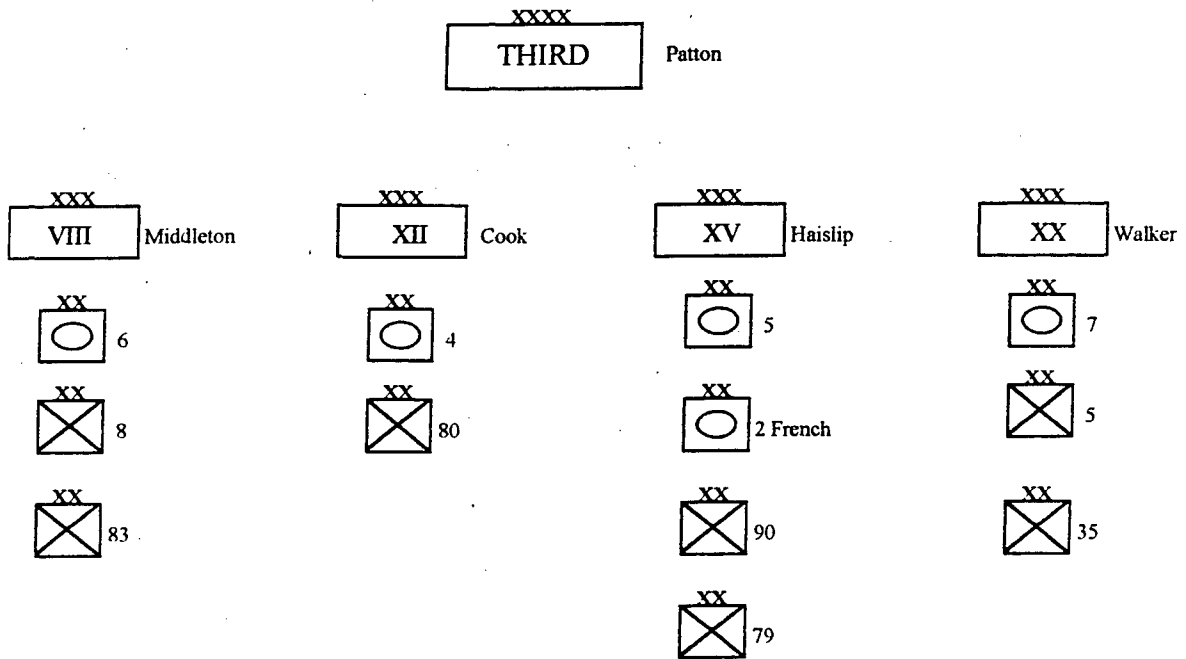
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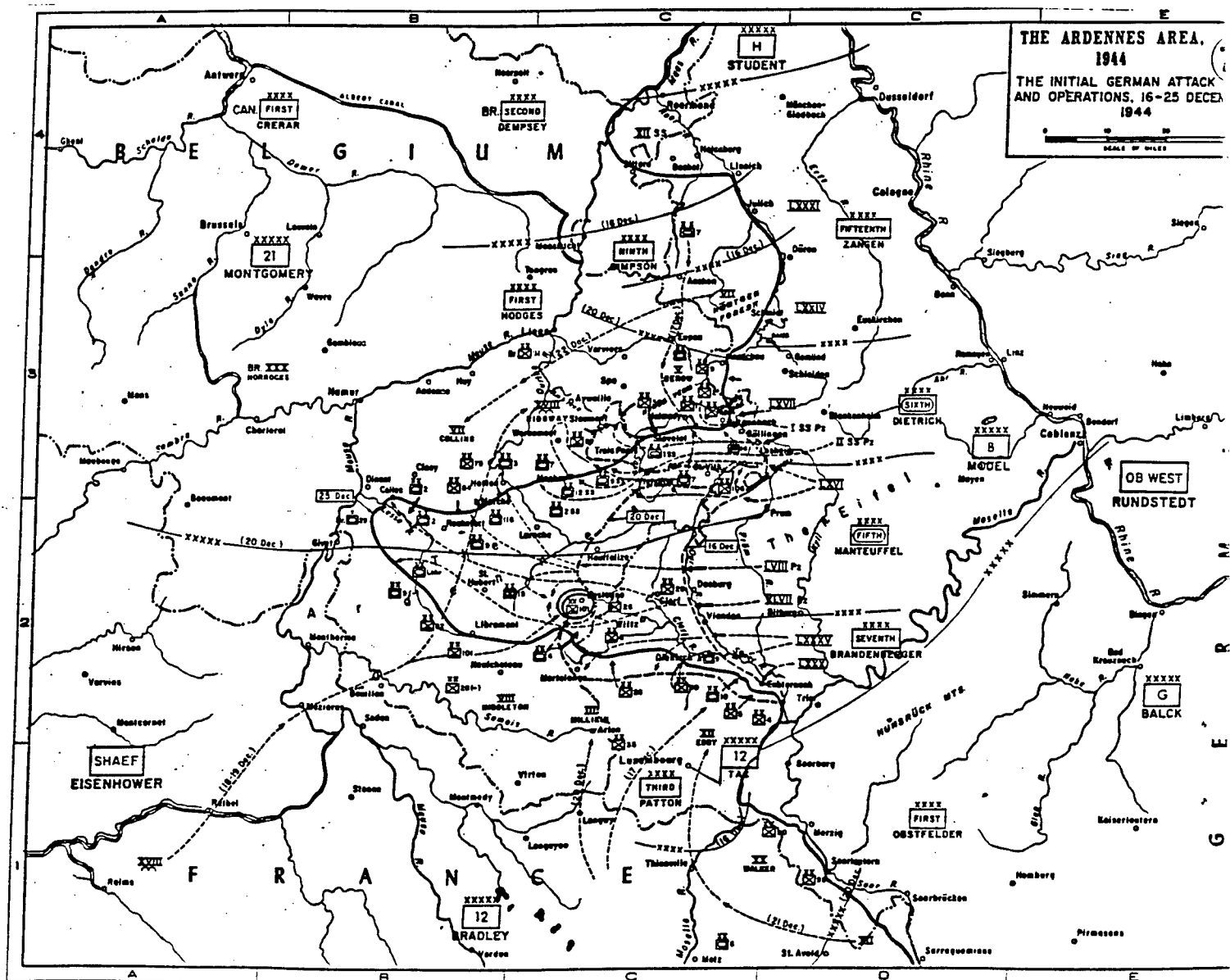
Appendix 1

Third Army Organization as of 1 August 1944



Appendix 2

The Ardennes Campaign



Appendix 3

The Breakout in France

